

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 24536 201324Z

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 201147Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4598

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 24536

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: SREF, BG, US, LY

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH OFFICERS ABOUT TO LEAVE THAILAND FOR LIBYA

REF: BANGKOK 24431 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: LTC. FAROOQ, LEADER OF BANGLADESH OFFICERS NOW IN BANGKOK, TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR NOVEMBER 20 THAT GROUP WOULD LEAVE BANGKOK IN NEXT DAY OR TWO FOR LIBYA. HE EXPRESSED NO FURTHER INTEREST IN THEIR APPLICATION FOR U.S. VISAS, AND THIS ISSUE CAN BE CONSIDERED AT LEAST DORMANT. FAROOQ REVIEWED RECENT EVENTS IN DACCA ALONG LINES ALREADY REPORTED BY EMBASSY DACCA. HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FORMER PRESIDENT MOSHTAQUE, EVIDENTLY BY PHONE, AND BELIEVES HE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN TO DACCA IN THREE MONTHS OR SO. HE SAID THAT, DESPITE APPEARANCES, MOSHTAQUE IS STILL EFFECTIVELY MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN ANY OTHER FIGURE. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR MET WITH LTC. FAROOQ, LEADER OF BANGLADESH OFFICERS IN THAILAND, AT LATTER'S REQUEST ON NOVEMBER 20. MEETING WAS ARRANGED IN CONSULAR SECTION OF EMBASSY (WHICH IS ABOUT ONE MILE FROM MAIN CHANCERY), WHICH FAROOQ HAD REASONABLE PURPOSE FOR VISITING IN VIEW OF HIS PENDING APPLICATION FOR U.S. VISA. NO RPT NO PRESS
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 24536 201324Z

ON HAND OR EVIDENTLY AWARE OF FAROOQ'S VISIT, AND WE ANTICI-

PATE NO RPT NO PUBLICITY REGARDING THIS MEETING.

2. FAROOQ SAID THAT HE AND GROUP OF 29 (INCLUDING WIVES AND CHILDREN) ARE ON POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR LIBYA. HE AVOIDED REPLY TO QUESTION RE DATE OF DEPARTURE, SIMPLY STATING THAT IT WILL BE IN NEXT DAY OR TWO. HE SAID GROUP'S PASSPORTS HAD BEEN RETURNED FROM BANGKOK TO BANGLADESH, WHERE LIBYAN VISAS HAD BEEN ENTERED, AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIP HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. THEY HAVE THEIR PASSPORTS NOW. HE SHOWED NO FURTHER INTEREST IN HIS APPLICATION FOR U.S. VISA, AND WE THINK THIS ISSUE CAN BE CONSIDERED TO BE DORMANT, AT LEAST.

3. FAROOQ SAID THAT BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR LIBYA HE WANTED OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER IN TERMS OF GENERAL SITUATION AND PROSPECTS IN BANGLADESH. HE RECOUNTED EVENTS SINCE NOVEMBER 3 IN BANGLADESH ALONG LINES ALREADY REPORTED BY EMBASSY DACCA. HE SAID THAT, DESPITE APPEARANCES, FORMER PRESIDENT MOSHTAQUE IS STILL EFFECTIVELY MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN ANY OTHER FIGURE. HE SAID HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH MOSTAQUE (EVIDENTLY BY TELEPHONE, THOUGH HE DID NOT SAY SO) AND THAT HE ANTICIPATES GROUP CAN RETURN TO BANGLADESH WITHIN THREE MONTHS OR SO. FAROOQ SAID THAT ONLY POINT WHERE HE HAD BEEN CONCERNED FOR HIS FUTURE WAS DURING BRIEF PERIOD IN EARLY NOVEMBER WHEN MG KHALID MOSHARRAF HAD BEEN IN CHARGE OF EVENTS IN DACCA. HOWEVER, ONCE KHALID HAD BEEN KILLED, SITUATION CHANGED, AND PURPOSE OF HIS REMAINING ABROAD AT THIS TIME WAS TO ALLOW ATMOSPHERE TO CALM DOWN. HE EXPRESSED DARK SUSPICIONS REGARDING INDIAN INTENTIONS TOWARDS BANGLADESH BUT SAID THAT PRC HAD ALREADY RATTLED ITS SABERS ON SINO INDIAN BORDER AS REMINDER TO INDIA NOT RPT NOT TO INTERFERE IN BANGLADESH.

4. INCIDENTALLY, FAROOQ EXPLAINED HIS RANK STATUS AS FOLLOWS: HE WAS DUE FOR PROMOTION TO LTC IN 1973 BUT INDICATED THAT THIS HAD BEEN BLOCKED BY OPPONENTS IN THE ARMY. HE SAID THAT HE AND LTC RASHID (MEMBER OF HIS PARTY IN BANGKOK) HAD RECENTLY BEEN PROMOTED BY A GENERAL BOARD FROM PREVIOUS RANK OF MAJOR. (WE NOTE THAT OTHER MEMBERS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 24536 201324Z

OF HIS PARTY INCLUDE LIEUTENANTS, CAPTAINS, AND SOME ENLISTED MEN, AND ASSUME THAT NOT ALL OF THEM CAN PROPERLY BE TERMED "MAJORS" IN ANY CASE.)

5. FAROOQ ELABORATED AT SOME LENGTH ON GRAND DESIGN WHICH HE SAID HE HAS BEEN THINKING ABOUT FOR LAST SEVERAL YEARS, INVOLVING ANTI-COMMUNIST BLOC OF MUSLIM NATIONS FROM INDONESIA TO ATLANTIC. HE SAID THAT MUSLIM NATIONS

CANNOT IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BECOME COMMUNIST-ORIENTED, THOUGH SURFACE APPEARANCES (SOVIET POSITION IN MIDDLE EAST) MAY INDICATE CONTRARY. HE SAID THAT, AS MILITARY AIDE TO FORMER PRESIDENT MOSHTAQUE, HE HAD MET AMBASSADOR BOSTER ON TWO OCCASIONS AND HAD EXPOUNDED HIS VIEWS TO HIM.

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY DACCA IS, OF COURSE, IN MUCH BETTER POSITION TO EVALUATE FAROOQ'S VIEW OF SITUATION IN BANGLADESH. SEEMS REASONABLY CLEAR THAT GROUP WILL LEAVE BANGKOK IN NEAR FUTURE, EVIDENTLY ENROUTE TO LIBYA. MIGHT BE HELPFUL IF EMBASSY DACCA PROVIDED EMBASSY TRIPOLI WITH SOME BACKGROUND ON FAROOQ, AS HE MAY ATTEMPT TO CONTACT EMBASSY TRIPOLI AT SOME POINT IN NEXT FEW MONTHS. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, FAROOQ APPEARED TO US TO BE HIGHLY-INTELLIGENT AND MOTIVATED YOUNG OFFICER, WITH SOMEWHAT CONFUSED POLITICAL VIEWS, A NATURAL LEADER WITH CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL, UNLESS HIS POLITICAL OUTLOOK BRINGS HIM INTO THE WAY OF A STRAY BULLET AND SO ENDS HIS CAREER.
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